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Town of Virgil News

VOLUME X ISSUE II

FALL/WINTER 2025

For Town Supervisor John Kaminski, Virgil is the Center of the Universe



Written by Elieen Deutsch

On December 31st, 2025 Town Supervisor John Kaminski will be stepping down after 18 years of service to the Town of Virgil. His tenure has been marked by calm, measured leadership, attention to fiscal restraint, deft problem-solving and, as he likes to put it, "Doing the dirty work. I break a problem down into manageable bits, and focus on solutions."

Born in Binghamton, NY, John's family moved to Virgil when he was three, he attended Virgil Central School, then the Cortland Enlarged School District. When he joined the Marines, he hadn't traveled farther than Syracuse. His first plane flight was to Paris Island Boot Camp in South Carolina, then on to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. As a Marine radio repairman, he attained the rank of Sergeant, traveled to Cuba, Norway, Germany, the Caribbean, Okinawa, and the Philippines and trained with NATO forces. After all his travel experiences, he says with great conviction, "Virgil is the center of the Universe. It's a very special town, with very special people."

Jobs were scarce when John returned from service, and while studying nights and weekends at TC3 for a degree in Electrical Engineering, he worked a variety of technical jobs, including the Cortland State heating plant, Monarch Tool, and a machine shop in MacLean before joining Cornell University as a machine and tool maker, where he eventually became overseer of the machine shop at the Laboratory of Elementary Particles Physics at the Cornell Synchrotron. After 33 years at Cornell, he retired in 2016.

In 2007, John was asked to run for Town Supervisor during a period when his problem-solving skills were greatly needed. John's proudest achievements are the creation of the building extension on the Town Hall, overhaul of Town finances, specifically how bills are paid, and how Town government can be run efficiently and effectively while saving taxpayers as much as possible. He has a few regrets, he had hoped to retain the Virgil Elementary School, or sell the Town Hall to a business and convert the school building to a new Town Hall. "The next big challenge is sales tax" he asserts. "The county is changing the sales tax distribution formula, and taxes will go up for townspeople. We're looking at a loss of between 10% and 12% in sales tax revenue."

After the recent election for town officers, John is content with the election of Board Members, Town Clerk and new Town Supervisor Jereme Stiles. "I've worked with Jereme for years, he and I think the same way in terms of fiscal matters, Virgil will be in good hands."

John is proud of his two sons, Jason and Nicholas, and his granddaughter Eve Rain, and he plans to spend his increased free time with family, especially holiday family gatherings, salmon fishing, and is greatly anticipating the start of deer season. He refers to it as his "religion", and loves nothing more than spending days in the woods waiting for "a nice big buck, or big does, to thin the herd."

We owe John Kaminski a vote of thanks for all his hard work and problem-solving skills, and wish him well in years to come.

GPAS Expands Its Mission to Bring Adaptive Snowsports to All

As winter approaches, GPAS (Greek Peak Adaptive Snowsports) is gearing up for another season of empowering individuals with disabilities through skiing, snowboarding, and mountain experiences. Built on the belief that everyone deserves the chance to enjoy the thrill of winter sports, GPAS is calling on community members to join its expanding volunteer team.

At the heart of the program is a clear mission: to provide snowsports experiences and skill development for people with disabilities, using the safest and most effective adaptive equipment and highly trained volunteers, all within a fun, supportive, and positive learning environment. GPAS serves children and adults with a wide range of disabilities, including developmental disabilities, visual impairments, paraplegia, amputations, and musculoskeletal challenges. Through adaptive equipment such as monoskis, outriggers, sliders, and customized teaching methods, volunteers help participants gain confidence, independence, and a passion for winter sports.

The program is powered entirely by volunteers and GPAS emphasizes that you don't have to be an expert skier to make a big impact. "Do you want to make a difference?" the organization asks. There are opportunities for every skill set. Strong skiers or snowboarders are especially needed to guide, assist, or instruct. Training is provided, and volunteers are matched with roles that match their comfort and skill levels. For those who prefer to help off the mountain, GPAS always needs volunteers passionate about event organization, fundraising, and community outreach. Funds raised support essential expenses such as insurance, adaptive equipment maintenance, heating for the GPAS lodge and, of course, plenty of hot chocolate. Mechanically inclined? Volunteers are needed to maintain and repair monoskis, outriggers, and other adaptive equipment. Inventory and equipment management are also critical roles. Have a strong back or extra winter energy? There's always snow to shovel, monoskis to carry, or sliders to push. GPAS stresses: "Tell us your skill and we will find a place for you to help!" Volunteers often describe the experience as some of the most rewarding work they've ever done full of smiles, breakthroughs, and a tight-knit community spirit. Whether you're a snowsports enthusiast, a fundraising whiz, a gear tinkerer, or simply someone wanting to help others experience joy on the mountain, GPAS has a place for you. For volunteer information, training dates, or details about the program, visit: <https://www.gpadaptive.org> As Greek Peak's adaptive community continues to grow, GPAS invites new volunteers to join the mission and help make this the most inclusive winter yet.

“Hollenbeck's Cider Mill has been family owned and operated since their humble beginning in 1933, pressing cider in the barn during the Depression.”

“The Town of Virgil is excited to share some news with our friends and neighbors: we have officially submitted an essay to the New York State Association of Towns for their statewide documentary project.”

Hollenbeck's Cider Mill Open for their 93rd Season

Hollenbeck's Cider Mill has been family owned and operated since their humble beginning in 1933, pressing cider in the barn during the Depression. They have since grown into a country grocery store complete with homemade donuts, pies, and other scratch baked goods. They proudly serve Virgil and the surrounding community by offering high-quality products and the opportunity to see how they're made.

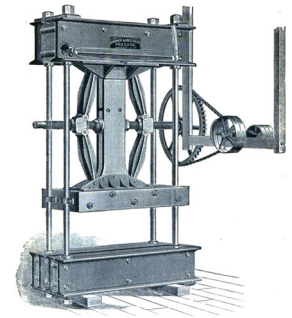
It's not just their tradition, it's ours:

Open On:

Weekends: 9 am - 6 pm

Weekdays: 10 am - 6 pm

Donut Room: Closed until 12/24/25



Did you know there was a prison camp in Virgil back in the 1930's?

Virgil Town Historian Marsha Powell wrote an article about it for the Virgil Stories book, which is excerpted here.

Camp Virgil was opened in 1930 to ease the overcrowding at the Auburn State Prison. As far as we can tell, it was located on farm property owned by the Munson family, about where Big Easy Stables stands now on Route 215. It held 75-100 men in dormitory housing. The complex had only barbed wire fencing and 5 guards, so prisoners were hand-picked by the warden. Most were nearing parole, so had incentive to behave, and most had been convicted of non-violent offenses. The prisoners were expected to work on improving the road that would become Rte 215. They started by improving the part from the camp to Virgil, then finished the section from camp to Cortland. They were paid 1 ½ cents per day, which could be spent at the camp "store" that sold luxuries like candy and cigarettes.

The prisoners did have time to enjoy themselves. In the winter, they built sleds and enjoyed sliding down hills. In the summer a baseball team was formed. They competed against many local town teams and won 14 out of 15 games, losing only to the Brockway Team. Special days were celebrated. Thanksgiving dinner one year included thirty-five chickens weighing a total of 141 pounds, a bushel of white potatoes, a bushel of sweets, celery, cranberries and all the trimmings. Ice cream and cake topped off the dinner. St. Patrick's Day included boxing matches, entertainment and music. This was followed by refreshments including sandwiches, green ice cream, cake and coffee. Convicts saw the Virgil Camp as a sort of paradise compared to overcrowded Auburn, and later Sing Sing.

The prisoners were good baseball players. A famous pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals, "Wild Bill" Hallahan, actually came to Virgil to scout one of the players at the camp in 1931! The unnamed prisoner was slated for release in a short time. Wonder if he made the team.

1930 was Prohibition time. Five convicts left the road gang one day, and found themselves some alcohol in the form of hard cider, furnished by a friendly Virgil resident. The men returned to camp very drunk, and were bundled right up and taken back to Auburn. The newspaper didn't say whether the Virgil resident was in any trouble.

There was one notorious escapee from the Virgil Camp, Joseph Donato. He was a 28 year old bad guy, imprisoned in 1929 at Auburn for second degree robbery. When he escaped, he went to a farmhouse where he found Mrs. George Barber. She tried to shut the door on him, and he pushed the door open violently and punched her in the head several times. He beat her up badly enough to require hospitalization. He got caught because her 12-year old son Richard recognized him. The boy was in the habit of watching the prisoners walk down his road, and recognized Donato as one of the gang. Richard saw the attack on his mother and ran to the neighbor's house for help. Donato fled but was captured quickly. He was sent right back to Auburn, where he undoubtedly did not get baseball games and pie-eating contests. At trial, his excuse was that he was drunk and "blacked out" and didn't remember beating Mrs. Barber. He was sentenced to an additional 7 years for this assault.

Another interesting escapee was 37 year old Albert Latham from Binghamton. He was serving 20 years to life for the murder of his wife Gertrude in 1922. He was 8 years into his sentence when he was transferred to the Virgil Camp. He got away and ran all the way to Taylor, where he hitched a ride with a farmer named Hugh Weaver. The farmer recognized his JAIL CLOTHES and questioned him about it. Latham panicked, jumped out of the car, and fled into a swamp near Cheningo Rd. Mr. Weaver called the cops, and a posse of 6 farmers was assembled to search for him. They all went in different directions, being very familiar with the swamp. Albert was caught in a hidey-hole in the swamp, pretending to be asleep. It wasn't until a rifle was placed on his forehead that he decided to "wake up." He told the cops he was just playing "hide and seek." Back to Auburn for Latham with an additional charge.

Prison Camp From Which Binghamton Slayer Fled



View of Administration building at Virgil prison from which three prisoners escaped Sunday night. It was in the yard in front of this building that Albert H. Latham of this city and his two companions in escape last reported at roll call at 8 o'clock. Inset, Albert H. Latham.

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Virgil Ski Club: A New Season on the Slopes 2026

As winter approaches, the excitement of another ski season is beginning to build. The Virgil Ski Club run through C.O.V.E. is gearing up for a fantastic year, and now is the perfect time to start planning for your child's winter adventure at Greek Peak.

The Virgil Ski Club continues to offer a fun, supportive, and memorable skiing experience for students in grades 3–8. Second-grade students are also welcome to join if a parent skier participates with them. This year's information packet includes everything families need to get started—program details, Virgil Cove forms, registration guidelines, and a step-by-step guide from Greek Peak. These materials are available for anyone who needs them at the Virgil Town Hall or on the Town of Virgil's website www.virgilny.gov (go to C.O.V.E.'s page)

Important Registration Deadline: All registrations must be completed by December 1. No forms or payments will be accepted after this date, so please plan to secure your child's spot. Family participation is strongly encouraged. Parents, we'd love to see you on the slopes! Adult passes are available, and families are strongly encouraged to ski together. Parents can also support the club by supervising or helping newer skiers gain confidence on the trails. The more involvement we have, the stronger and safer the program becomes.

Please spread the word! If you know any Virgil residents with children in grades 3–8 who might be interested in joining the club, please share this information. We are always excited to welcome new families into the program. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out by phone or email to Heather Evanick, Virgil Cove Program Advisor at 607-310-8792.

Community Organized
C.O.V.E.
Virgil Events

Up coming Events at the Virgil Community Living Center By: Teresa Baker



IT'S BACK! THE 2ND ANNUAL BLACK FRIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA at the Virgil Living Center

Join them for a fun-filled day of Christmas shopping, great vendors, and delicious breakfast or lunch.
Horse-drawn sleigh/wagon rides: \$5 per person
November 28 • 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Kick off your Christmas shopping and support local businesses!

Vendors are still welcome.

Afterward, there will be time for photos with Santa, and Mrs. Claus

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY WITH C.O.V.E.

Caroling • Wagon Rides • Cookies & Cocoa • Santa (with VCLC & C.O.V.E.)

December 5 • 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Free wagon rides: 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Caroling, cocoa, and cookies inside VCLC: 5:45 – 7:15 PM

Then moving outside!

7:30 PM: Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive on the fire truck to light the tree!

Virgil, NY — Keep Your Fingers Crossed! Our Town's Story May Soon Be Told Statewide

The Town of Virgil is excited to share some news with our friends and neighbors: we have officially submitted an essay to the New York State Association of Towns for their statewide documentary project, "The Builders of America: How Towns Have Shaped Our Country." While we don't yet know whether Virgil will be selected as a finalist, we're proud to have put our community's story forward—and we invite everyone to join us in hoping for good news! This documentary is part of the Association's celebration of America's upcoming 250th anniversary, a momentous milestone in our nation's history. As part of the celebration, the Association is gathering stories from towns across New York State—stories of local traditions, historic milestones, and the ways ordinary communities have played extraordinary roles in shaping America.

Finalists will be professionally filmed and featured in the documentary, which is set to premiere on February 2026 at the New York Marriott Marquis during the Annual Meeting & Training School. It's an incredible opportunity for small towns like ours to shine on a statewide stage—and to share what makes Virgil such a special place to live.

Though we won't hear the results for some time, we're honored to have represented Virgil by submitting an essay that reflects our history, our character, and our contributions to the American story. Whether or not we're chosen, the process has been a wonderful reminder of the strength, resilience, and spirit of our community.

So, Virgil keep your fingers crossed! With a little luck, we just might see our hometown featured in this once-in-a-generation documentary celebrating 250 years of America.

In the meantime, thank you to everyone who helps make Virgil a place worth writing about.

If you would like to read the article that was submitted visit www.virgilny.gov. (go to the Town Historian's page)





Town of Virgil

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We're here to serve you. Visit our website at:

www.virgilny.org

Virgil Town Supervisor: John Kaminski

Deputy Supervisor: Jereme Stiles

Town Council Members: Matt Denniston, Matt Simpson, Ryan Mullally

The Town Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month. Meetings start at 6:30 P.M.

- Town Clerk/Collector: Alane Van Donsel
- Deputy Clerk: Debra Marrotte
- Town's Bookkeeper: Shannon Doubet
- Town Accountant: Colin Cahill
- Town Justice: Mack Cook
- Highway Superintendent: Britt Morse
- Animal Control Officer: Lindsay Anderson
- Town Assessor: Brian Fitts
- Town Attorney: Daniel Ellis II
- Code Enforcement: Kevin McMahon
- Zoning Officer: Adam Brown
- County Legislator: Sandy Price
- Town Historian: Marsha Powell



Virgil Rural Cemetery News: Stars & Stripes by: Sue Connelly

The Virgil Rural Cemetery was decorated with hundreds of flying flags honoring our hometown deceased veterans, firefighters and first responders. Our community cemetery is honored to be the final resting area to over 300 brave men and women who served our local community and country through the decades! The past, present and future heroes are appreciated for their service. A big thank you to the many people who have made the flag project possible through the years, especially Jon Levy who besides sending hours obtaining and placing flags has created an extensive list of over 300 veterans including 22 Revolutionary War Soldiers in Virgil Rural and nearby area cemeteries.

A new pole and flag were donated this year by Dave Denniston replacing a broken and rusty pole enhancing the cemetery grounds. His generosity is appreciated and enjoyed by all.

It takes a village to keep the cemetery a beautiful peaceful area. The cemetery has been fortunate to have an active board and group of volunteers that donate hours of time working on monuments, fall/spring clean-up sessions, picking up branches after storms to name a few. The annual fall clean-up is generally scheduled for a Saturday morning at the end of October and welcomes all volunteers.

LEGISLATOR REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2024



The most recent legislative session covered a wide range of important topics. Committee reports were presented, and several residents voiced concerns about how Occupancy Tax funds are being distributed.

One highlight of the evening was the presentation of

the Breast Cancer Awareness Month proclamation. As an eleven-year breast cancer survivor, this recognition was especially meaningful to me. I encourage anyone who is due—or overdue—for a mammogram to please make an appointment. Early detection truly saves lives. Assemblyman Gallahan also joined us to provide an in-depth update from Albany. He took numerous questions from legislators and the public, offering detailed responses on key state issues. Throughout the session, the Legislature reviewed a variety of appointments,

agreements, annual contracts, and other routine resolutions. We also discussed the permitting process for a new landfill cell and considered a resolution to override the tax cap for the upcoming fiscal year.

Budget Work Continues: The County budget is currently under detailed review by the County Administrator Michael Ponticello, along with legislative committees and individual legislators. At this stage, the budget sits around an 8% increase, though continued work may change that figure. The County Administrator's formal budget will be released in the coming days. Once presented, the Legislature has until December 15 to adopt a final budget—otherwise, the Administrator's proposal will automatically become the 2026 budget.

If there is anything you believe I should be aware of, or actions you think I should be taking on your behalf, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thought for the Month: Do what makes you happy, or you'll never be happy with what you do.

Wishing you and your family a warm and joyful Thanksgiving. Sandy Price 607-423-2019

Town Budget Adopted

The Town of Virgil is pleased to announce that the 2026 Town Budget has been adopted. Residents may now view the complete budget at <http://www.virgilny.gov>, located on the Town Board's page.

While the town budget is finalized, Cortland County is still in the process of working through its 2026 budget. Their proposed budget is available for public review on the Legislative website at: <https://www.cortlandcountyny.gov/286/Legislature>. They do not anticipate approving their final budget until Dec. 15th, 2025. Because the Real Property Tax Office cannot begin preparing the 2026 tax bills until the county budget is approved, this delay will push back the printing and processing of the tax bills. As a result, tax bills will be ready much later than usual. However, we will make every effort to ensure tax bills are mailed before January 1st.

We appreciate residents' patience and understanding as these final budget steps are completed. If you have any questions, please contact the Town of Virgil Tax Collector Alane Van Donsel for additional information.